

Presidio of Monterey, Soldier Field
Monterey
Monterey County
California

HABS No. CA-22⁶66-A

HABS
CAL
27-MONT,
47A-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Western Region
Department of the Interior
San Francisco, California 94107

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

PRESIDIO OF MONTEREY, Soldier Field

HABS No. CA-2⁶266-A

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Location: Presidio of Monterey, Soldier Field
Monterey
Monterey County, California

U.S.G.S.: Monterey, CA. Quadrangle (7.5' series), 1947 (revised 1983) UTM Coordinates: West ditch 4,051,650 N, 598,260 E; East ditch 4,051,650 N, 598,330 E; Kit Carson Road, west end 4,051,620 N, 598,160 E and east end 4,051,610 N, 598,370 E; West pilaster and wall 4,051, 600 N, 598, 245 E; East pilaster 4,051,610 N, 598,270 E; low wall 4,051,615 N, 598,335 E

Present Owner: United States Army

Present Occupants: United States Army, Defense Language Institute

Present Use: Military

Significance:

Soldier Field, established on the original Monterey military reservation, was laid out in 1902 as the parade ground for the Presidio of Monterey. The eight-acre parade and athletic competition grounds was planted in bermuda grass and drained by rock-lined ditches around its perimeter. Soldier Field was improved in 1935-1936 when Depression-era relief program crews leveled the sloping grounds into two separate fields, erected a reviewing stand, and built stone retaining walls with pilasters and a drainage system around its perimeter. Kit Carson Road was extended through the grounds at this time. During World War II, the field was partially paved and built over with a temporary reception center and barracks, later removed in 1975-76 (Jackson Research Projects [JRP] 1985).

The rock wall, pilasters, and west ditch at Soldier Field were constructed during the Depression-era works projects, along with the extension of Kit Carson Road across the field. The east ditch was constructed when Soldier Field was initially laid out in 1902. All the features are significant for their association with military history in northern California, and with conservation work during the Depression. Soldier Field retains significant historical characteristics of the early Old Post-era and the Depression-era work projects.

Description:

Soldier Field is an approximately eight-acre parade ground near the center of the Presidio of Monterey. The field, used for both review and recreation, is bounded by Patton Avenue on the east, Infantry Street on the south, Stilwell Avenue on the west and Plummer Street on the north. Kit Carson Road runs along the perimeter of the field parallel with Plummer Street. Double stone and concrete stairs lead to a concrete reviewing stand at the west end of the field. This stand looks across the field to Monterey Bay and the City of Monterey below (see CA-2266-A-3). Stone and concrete retaining walls extend around the field from the stand. The field is terraced in two levels. The upper level, near Stilwell Avenue, is connected to the lower level by two stairways.

Retaining Walls and Pilasters

A stone wall along Kit Carson Road defines the northwestern perimeter of Soldier Field (see CA-2266-A-6). The wall is 26 inches tall and is composed of concrete-mortared irregular sandstone blocks. It is capped with a 3.5-inch-thick by 14.75-inch-wide concrete slab with rounded edges. The wall terminates in a pilaster at its eastern end. From the pilaster, the wall extends approximately 260 feet west to the reviewing stand. This concrete pilaster is 3 feet tall with a 3.5-inch-thick concrete slab cap with rounded corners. The pilaster is 24 inches wide on each side. The cap is 28 inches by 28 7/8 inches wide. It is embossed on top with a 5-inch by 8-inch bas-relief design that reads, "Made By/CCC Boys/Camp Ord". Another similar emblem decorates the eastern face of the pilaster. This shield-shaped design is 11 inches by 11 inches and sits 3 inches below the cap. It reads, "Technical Service/Ord Military Camp A2 & A3" written around the signature emblem for the Technical Service - - the letters "US" with a transit and tripod (see CA-2266-A-7). The pilaster is sited on grass protected with a 7.5-inch-tall by 5.5-inch-wide concrete curb. The curb extends between the southern side of Kit Carson Road and the stone wall, then curves around the pilaster to meet the south side of the wall (see CA-2266-A-6).

A second pilaster identical in size and shape sits isolated to the east, forming an entrance to the parade ground. This post has no associated wall, although a remnant of a wall foundation extends a few feet to the east (see CA-2266-A-5). It does not have the emblem of the Technical Services, but does bear an identical CCC emblem on its cap.

A low section of stone retaining wall is located near the bottom of Soldier Field along the southwestern end of Kit Carson Road (see CA-2266-A-10, -11). The wall is composed of concrete-mortared sandstone blocks. It extends approximately 120 feet to the intersection of Kit Carson Road and Patton Avenue. It is about 6 inches wide, emerges from grade and gains in elevation as it moves east to a maximum height of 8 inches. This wall retains the ball field above it to the south.

It is situated 7.5 feet from Kit Carson Road, with lawn planted between the road and the wall.

Ditches

A west ditch or gutter extends 60 feet from an intake near the west pilaster under Kit Carson Road to an older cobble-lined ditch below Plummer Street. The intake is 14.5 inches wide and roughly 16 inches long (see CA-2266-A-7). It is covered with a grate consisting of 8 lengths of 2-inch-diameter metal pipe flattened at the ends and welded to flat iron bars.

The ditch itself is formed cement. It is rectangular in shape and has a 16-inch-wide concrete bottom flanked by two concrete walls each 6 inches wide, for a total width of 30 inches. The ditch is 7.25 inches deep and trends diagonally at approximately a 45 degree angle from Kit Carson Road. It intersects an asphalt footpath 32 feet from where the ditch emerges from under the road across the intake. At this intersection, the ditch is covered by a 12-foot-long concrete bridge (see CA-2266-A-9). The bridge consists of flattened 2-inch-wide pipe covered with corrugated metal sheeting and finished with concrete.

The east ditch/retaining wall consists of concrete-mortared river cobbles. The wall is roughly 12 to 14 inches high and 6 inches (or one course of stone) thick. In many places it has been remortared to stabilize the wall. There is a 15-inch-wide concrete gutter at its base. It sits amid a grove of trees at the bottom of a grass slope below Kit Carson Road (CA-2266-A-12). In some areas, soil and vegetation have obscured the gutter (see CA-2266-A-13). The wall/ditch curves to the north, joining another cobble-lined ditch that runs parallel with Plummer Street. Both ditches then drain into a large storm intake just below Plummer Street.

Kit Carson Road

Kit Carson Road is 21 feet wide overall, consisting of a 17-foot, 3-inch-wide section of asphalt roadway, flanked by 20-inch-wide concrete gutters and 5.5-inch wide, 8-inch-tall concrete curbs (see CA-2266-A-4). The road parallels the northern perimeter of Soldier Field, then extends east and west of the field through the Presidio.

Historical Context:

Soldier Field was designed as the focal point of the Presidio of Monterey, California. (The reader is referred to Herbert et al. 1985 for a thorough historical overview of the Presidio). Laid out in 1902, eight-acre Soldier Field served for many years as the showplace of infantry, cavalry and artillery units. After 1914, it was used strictly for cavalry review (see CA-2266-A-14) until World War II, when it was temporarily covered with buildings. These reviews, as well as athletic competitions, were often attended by the citizens of Monterey as well as Presidio personnel.

Soldier Field was originally designed as part of an open sloping grassland centered amid the Presidio's network of roads that followed the natural contours of the land. Housing and other structures were placed around this open area. Through time, roadways have been added, extended, renamed and removed around Soldier Field (Corbett 1992; U.S. Army 1904).

Panoramic photographs of Soldier Field taken between 1917 and the mid-1920s indicate that the field was an untterraced open area of sand and grass that gradually sloped eastward toward a spectacular view of Monterey Bay. Early improvements around the field consisted of a flag staff as well as cobble-lined and mortared drainage ditches around the field perimeter along Stilwell Avenue and Plummer Street. Few other changes were made to the field, aside from improvement of the flag stand, until the mid-1930s.

Between 1933 and 1938, the Presidio was the subject of a beautification project designed to provide work for Depression-era relief programs. The State Emergency Relief Administration (SERA) and Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) were very active on the Presidio. The projects were intended to improve both function and appearance of the Presidio. These crews built stone retaining walls, fences, trails and a drainage system, changed and improved road alignments, and constructed recreational facilities.

Much of this work was completed under the direction of post commandant Colonel Troup Miller, who took advantage of the federal works projects to secure labor. Work on Soldier Field was underway when Miller came to the post. He continued the work, including leveling the parade grounds, constructing a retaining wall around the field and building a stadium at its upper end (see CA-2266-A-16, -17). It appears turf was planted at this time on the formerly sandy field (*Monterey Peninsula Herald* 4 April 1936). Ornamental stone steps were also built at the southeast end of the field. Present-day Stilwell Avenue was widened so that cars could park at right angles to the street, overlooking the field. A road "wide enough for troops to pass . . . in columns of platoons" was planned to encircle the grass football field (*The Cavalry Journal* September-October 1935:76).

Roadways throughout the Presidio have been altered and renamed throughout its history, especially during the mid-1930s. Early maps from 1902 to 1908 give no street names. One mid-1930s photograph of Soldier Field seems to depict a dirt wagon path along the current alignment of Kit Carson Road between Stilwell and Patton avenues (see CA-2266-A-15). One document from the Presidio in 1930 describes Kit Carson Road as extending uphill from Building 338, the Officers' Quarters. In 1936, the road was extended across Soldier Field between Patton and Fitch as part of a roadwork project by the CCC. New roads and improvements were integrated into the preexisting road network by altering some intersections (Corbett 1992:1; McNaughton 1996).

During World War II, temporary barracks and a reception center were constructed on Soldier Field. Asphalt paving for roadways was placed around these buildings over the grass of the parade ground. The temporary barracks and asphalt were removed during 1975, so the field could be restored to its original function (JRP 1985; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 1952, 1953).

Sources:

Cavalry Journal

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Herbert, Rand F., Stephen R. Wee, and Stephen D. Mikesell

1985 *Historical Resources Overview: Presidio of Monterey, Monterey, California*. Jackson Research Projects, Davis, California. On file, Department of the Army, Corps of Engineers, Sacramento District.

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1985 Historic Resources Inventory Form, Soldier Field. JRP, Davis, California. On file, California State Resources Agency, Department of Parks and Recreation, Sacramento, California.

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1994 *Presidio of Monterey: Historic Preservation Plan and Maintenance Manual*. Page & Turnbill, San Francisco, California. Prepared for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Sacramento.

United States Army, Corps of Engineers

1904 Map, Presidio of Monterey, Formerly Ord Barracks, Cal. Record Group 92, Post and Reservation File, Presidio of Monterey, California, No. 12. National Archives, Cartographic Branch, College Park, Maryland.

1952 Map, Presidio of Monterey, Layout, Monterey County, California. Office of the District Engineer, San Francisco District, San Francisco, California. On file, Command Historian's Office, Defense Language Institute, Presidio of Monterey.

1953 Map, Presidio of Monterey, Topography, Monterey County, California. Office of the District Engineer, San Francisco District, San Francisco, California. On file, Command Historian's Office, Defense Language Institute, Presidio of Monterey.

Supplemental Data:

The line-drawn site sketch was drafted on site in 1996 by Cindy Baker based on historic maps and site visit, then scanned into a computer and drawn, corrected and finalized by Claire Warshaw in 1996 (all PAR Environmental Services, Inc. staff).

Project Information:

Presidio of Monterey is owned by the United States Army for the Defense Language Institute under the planning authority of the Army Corps of Engineers. Portions of Soldier Field on the Presidio are being impacted by construction of recreational facilities planned in conjunction with the City of Monterey. The two pilasters and a minimum of 11 feet of the west retaining wall will be impacted by construction. The pilasters will be removed intact and relocated. The wall will be taken apart and the stones stacked for Army curation. Kit Carson Road will be demolished from Patton Avenue approximately to the present location of the east pilaster. The ditches will be covered with fill. Part or all of the low retaining wall, or east wall, may also be covered with fill.

As part of the Army's undertaking, it has been determined that the project will have an adverse impact on certain features on Soldier Field and that these features are part of the Presidio of Monterey District that is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (Page and Turnbull 1994). Based on consultation with the California State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, pursuant to 36 CFR part 800, regulations implementing Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. 470f), these features are being recorded to HABS standards to mitigate the adverse project impacts under the guidance of the National Park Service, San Francisco, California, office.

PRESIDIO OF MONTEREY,
Soldier Field

HABS No. CA-22⁶66-A Page 7

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